The Representative
DOGRI POEMS

of

Narsingh Dev Jamwal

Introduced and Translated
by
Dr. Lakshmi Narain

To,
Dr. R. L. Shant
With respect &
kind regards

Jamwal
11.1.98

THE REPRESENTATIVE DOGRI POEMS
OF
NARSINGH DEV JAMWAL

Translated with an Introduction and notes
by
Lakshmi Narain Sharma

G.M. College of Education
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About the Translator

Dr. Lakshmi Narain Sharma is a veteran teacher of English. He was educated in India, England, and North America. His rich academic portfolio holds amongst other impressive credentials an M.A. in English with distinction from the University of Leeds and a Ph.D. from the University of Lancaster. His *An Introduction to Dogri Folk Literature and Pahari Art* done in collaboration with Sansar Chand is a ground-breaking work in the related field. The work was published by Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, and is listed under Narain, Lakshmi in volume 67 of *The National Union Catalog.* An award-winning Dogri essayist, discerning critic, and brilliant broadcaster, Dr. Sharma is fully committed to the pursuit of academic excellence.

Dr. Sharma undertook to render my representative Dogri poems into English at my request, and once again he has lived up to his reputation as a person of eminent literary accomplishment. His English translation has captured with amazing accuracy, spontaneous ease, and delicate finesse the tone, the flavour, the spirit, and the substance of my Dogri poems. Dr. Sharma has thus successfully executed a fine balancing act between conscientious adherence to the original text and creative elegance of the translation.

Although Dr. Sharma is not a poet in the conventional sense, his English translation of my Dogri poems bears luminous testimony to his keen poetic sensibility which, in my opinion, primarily accounts for the exquisiteness of this translation.

Narsingh Dev Jamwal

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TO

LOVE AND PEACE

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INTRODUCTION

Narsingh Dev Jamwal holds a respectable niche in the history of Dogri literature. He can craft a play, spin a tale, and compose a poem with equal grace and adeptness. A writer with a dynamic thrust, daring stance, and versatile pen, Jamwal ranks high among the literary pioneers with whom Dogri literature came of age. As might be expected, Jamwal is no stranger to awards and honours conferred on him in recognition of his literary merit. *The Representative Dogri Poems of Narsingh Dev Jamwal* is based on the poems judiciously selected by Jamwal himself from his published and unpublished work, and therefore covers the full gamut of his poetic vision.

The Dogri language spoken by the Dogras is an offshoot of the Indo-Iranian branch of languages which is a subfamily of the Indo-European stock. Dogri has an inflectional syntax; but it is also flexible enough to absorb words and expressions from other languages; and this bipartite character of Dogri accounts for its considerable linguistic advantage. While the regulated syntactical structure of Dogri invests it with classical dignity, its glottic syncretism makes it one of the most vibrant and effective media of communication among the languages of the Indian subcontinent.

Dogri is spoken by nearly twelve million people who inhabit an area of nearly sixty thousand square miles stretching along the foothills of the lesser Himalayas from Jammu province in the north to Himachal Pradesh in the southeast.

A dweller of the hilly terrain of Jammu province is called *Paharia* which is covered by the generic term Dogra. The term *Paharia* is also connotative of a speaker of Pahari which is construed as a synonym of Dogri. It may thus be pointed out that although the language spoken in Himachal Pradesh is called Pahari, the word Pahari is only a semantic variation of Dogri. Both Dogri and Pahari share the same linguistic character, and the only difference between the two is that they are spoken with a different accent. Analogously speaking, Dogri and Pahari are no more different from each other than are Scottish and English.

The land of the Dogras is known as Duggar. The Dogras are mainly an agricultural community. Self-esteem, candour, and uprightness run in their blood; and they have made quite a name for their prowess in the battlefield. The Dogras are forged out of a sturdy stuff and can courageously withstand the buffets of time. Privation, drought, wars, oppression, they have seen it all. The ruggedness of their land has rubbed off on their spirit and they know how to survive.

Jamwal is a typical Dogra. Born on February 28, 1931 in Bhalwal, a suburban neighbourhood of Jammu, Jamwal virtually had to rough it. Financial hardship prevented Jamwal from pursuing his education after high school which he finished in 1945. However, he kept his dream of higher education alive and forty-two years later was able to add to his credentials a master's degree in Dogri from the Jammu University, and numerous literary works some of which found their way to the curricula designed by the Jammu University for post graduate and undergraduate courses in Dogri. This was Jamwal's way of turning the tables on adverse circumstances which once conspired to keep him deprived of his academic distinction.

The desperate need of employment led Jamwal to enlist in the army in 1945. During the 1947 armed conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, Jamwal went through a harrowing ordeal. By Jamwal's own account, he found himself in front of the enemy's firing squad but had a miraculous reprieve only moments before his body was going to be riddled with bullets. Jamwal's brush with death turned out to be a mystical experience which threw open the shutters of his mind so that the light of the beauty and sacredness of life inundated his being. This experience profoundly influenced Jamwal's poetic vision characterized by empathic sensitivity and broad cosmopolitanism.

Jamwal obtained an honourable discharge from the army in 1951, and two years later joined the State police. Jamwal rose from the ranks. He retired in 1986 as a Deputy Superintendent with numerous laurels topped with the Presidential Police Medal for his meritorious services. Solid commitment and unabated zeal with which Jamwal throws himself into the battle for a worthy cause is yet another aspect of his soldiering career which he keeps tirelessly pursuing on the humanitarian front.

Dogri literature found its origin primarily in the necessity to define and uphold the Dogra identity which faced a formidable challenge in the mid-1940's due to a massive political upheavel in Jammu and Kashmir State. A dramatic turn of events in 1947 brought to an end the Dogra dynastic regime founded by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846. Maharaja Gulab Singh, whose astounding militaristic adroitness was only matched by his superb statesmanship, consolidated Jammu and Kashmir State against overwhelming odds. The Dogra regime gave its subjects a benign and reform-oriented government. The Dogra monarchs without exception never allowed their guards and palaces to stand between them and their people. The Dogra community identified itself with the Dogra regime; and when the latter collapsed in 1947, the Dogra psyche also collapsed with it.

For Jammu and Kashmir State, as for the rest of India, 1947 was a momentous year which saw the dawn of a democratic era. However, the new State government had to make some expedient constitutional adjustments though not without the concurrence of the Indian government to cope with a delicate political situation with global implications, which was caused by the incursion of the neighbouring Pakistan to enforce her unwarrantable claim over the State. As a result of this political exigence, the Dogras were stuck with a constitution whose balance to some degree was tipped against them; and this raw constitutional deal delivered a further blow to their psyche which was already in shambles.

The sudden and drastic change in the political scene of the State brought the Dogras to a critical juncture where they were confronted with a perplexing choice. It was the choice between conformity to the new political situation which seemed to compromise their ethnic identity, and their ethnic identity which could compromise their national solidarity. The Dogras were not sure whether this choice, which landed them in a quandary, was an acid test of their nationalism or political blackmail which they must vigorously resist. The Dogra psyche was torn between ethnic pride and national solidarity, and this conflict was polarized into acrimonious political factions. The Dogra community was in the grip of an identity crisis.

Dogri has a precious treasure of folk literature passed down by word of mouth, but its written literature comprised only a handful of verses sporadically produced over a long period before the 1940's. A community without its written literature is a community without a face; it cannot even know itself; it thus remains unknown and may not even have a memorial footnote at the bottom of a historical page.

The identity crisis brought home to the creative Dogra minds the importance of a literary forum which could lend voice to the concerns, feelings, and aspirations of Duggar; and this literary forum known as *Dogri Sanstha* came into being in the mid-forties and has since become the pivotal point of Dogri literary movement.

Dogri writers resolutely came to grips with the identity crisis; but they differ in their methods which can be broadly classified as negatory and affirmatory.

The negatroy method is of dissociative character; it involves a voluntary repudiation of one's original identity in conflict with the new environment, and thereby seeks to avoid the disconcertion due to one's maladjustment accentuated by that conflict. Dinu Bhai Pant, an early Dogri poet, employed the negatory method to resolve the identity crisis. One of his works *Gutloon* (*The Tickler*), a versified lampoon whose publication coincided with the political turmoil in the State in the forties, provides a glaring example of negatory method. Tejan, the protagonist of *Gutloon*, who has a rural upbringing and no schooling, unwittingly lands himself in a totally unfamiliar urban environment which sets the stage for his zany predicaments. Tejan is portrayed as a country bumpkin whose bewilderment in new metropolitan surroundings, though perfectly natural and understandable, is treated with sneering contempt. Like Tejan, Pant too has his roots in a rural community and little or no benefit of formal education. Tejan therefore is not only a typical specimen of the rural community which Pant shares with him, but also an alter ego of Pant himself. Pant's rejection of Tejan reflected in his derisive treatment of the latter thus becomes a rejection of Pant's own personal and ethnic identity which Pant finds disconcertingly outmoded in the new political setting symbolized by the new environment with which Tejan is confronted in *Gutloon*.

However, the negatory method employed by Pant in *Gutloon* to resolve the identity crisis has a serious drawback which makes this method self-defeating. The negatory method often degenerates into gratuitous disdain and denigration which can take the form of sarcasm, and sarcasm is justifiable only if it is directed against sham, cant, cockiness, pretence, or some other moral failing whereof Tejan shows no sign. His actions are consistent with his native simplicity and bucolic innocence. He neither tries to mimic the new urban ways nor is he ashamed of his rural upbringing. His unpretentiousness and integrity are simply admirable. Therefore the vitriolic scorn poured on him because of his innocent gaucherie in an environment which takes him by surprise, is not only unfair but also ungracious. It is just like jeering a person over some disability which is beyond control. That Pant has a problem with Tejan betokens the problem that Pant has with himself. Tejan is a psychological projection of Pant's own self; Pant's sardonic raillery against Tejan is therefore a symptom of Pant's disgruntled disclamation of his own personal and ethnic identity which he finds mortifying because of its embarrassing inadequacy to the new challenges.

The unwarrantable mockery of Tejan ironically betrays the poet's own snobbery which is often practised by those without substance to lay claim to gentility and sophistication.

The negatory method backfires because instead of resolving the identity crisis it does away with the very identity itself and leads to the assumption of a false persona or mask to beguile oneself and others.

However, a mask, no matter how cunningly designed, does not become a face; it does not provide the necessary potential to face the winds of change, and eventually gets blown away giving rise to psychoneurosis with disastrous results.

The true sense of identity is a positive recognition of the substantial worth of one's being. Dissimulation simply indicates the loss of identity and cuts us asunder from our cultural and ethnic moorings and thereby sets us adrift on the battering tides of time. By pretending to be what we are not we forget who we are and end up being nothing.

The affirmatory method seeks to reinforce one's true identity by dwelling on its positive aspects conducive to self-esteem and self-confidence. It challenges us to dredge up our latent potential and harness it to our utmost advantage. It maintains that in order to be what we aspire to be we must fully accept ourselves as we are without self-deception; and this self-acceptance not only spares us the neurotic torment of living a lie but also blazes the trail of self-improvement. Unless we know where we are we cannot find the way to go where we want to go.

Happily, Dogri writers in general followed the affirmatory method to prevail over the identity crisis. A few examples in this respect seem to be quite in order.

An early Dogri poet Raghunath Singh Samayal in his classic poetic work *Khand Vi Dogray Kheer Vi Dogray (Winsome Traits of the Dogras)* highlighted the intriguing blend of mellifluous disposition and rugged firmness in the ethnic make-up of the Dogras, and thereby positively enhanced their self-awareness.

Kehar Singh Madhukar, an outstanding Dogri poet and in the vanguard of Dogri literary movement, approached the Dogra identity crisis from a vitalistic angle. Madhukar holds that true identity is not a matter of form but is to be found in one's inner resources. Ethnic and cultural traits of a community are only a cumulative expression of the inner resources of each of its members, and are therefore incidental rather than essential to its true identity. According to Madhukar's vitalistic thought, external crutches would not avail in the face of an ordeal, whereas inner resources promise wonderous possibilities. In "Hamb" ("Stretching Out") Madhukar observes:

The animated dust
Is out to soar as high
As it must
To eavesdrop on the sky.

To Madhukar 'now' is of crucial importance, for it allows us to try again and lay de novo the groundwork of our future. Infatuation with the past is the symptom of a regressive mind unable to face up to the present. History, as Madhukar maintains in "Phalee" ("Streak"), is an idle record of things dead and gone.

The bygone months

Through the transom of life peeked,
And proclaimed that
The year is no more.

The past whether glorious or ignominious is history, and nothing fruitful can be gained by harping on it. Our historical failures fill the mind with vain regrets, and our historical triumphs pamper it with vain exultation. In either case, history becomes a psychological catacomb from which the mind cannot easily extricate itself. Attachment to history acts as an opiate to our awareness of the present and thereby precondemns our future to stillbirth. Besides, we make history, history does not make us. In "Rasta Ik Itihas" ("The Course of History") Madhukar affirms:

Hands
That hold the reins of Time
Determine the course of history.

Madhukar therefore is all for wiping the historical slate clean so that we can turn to our inner resources to shape our destiny as we please. The belief in unfailing human resourcefulness provides Madhukar with a rationale for his optimistic vision which the following lines from "Yuge Di Aas" ("Promise of the New Age") clearly reflect:

The culminating phase is nigh,
The spirit of the age is for new order bound;
A little more push and in a matter of minutes
Things will turn around.

It seems that Madhukar has his own brand of existentialism which seeks to emancipate his Dogra community from the historical conditioning of its potential to enable it to redefine its identity in terms of new laurels.

Tara Smailpuri in his volume of poems entitled *Jeevan Lehran (The Vital Waves)* rendered an invigorating and emotion-charged portrayal of some of the brilliant aspects of Dogra culture which infused the Dogra community with a sense of dignity and accomplishment.

Mohan Lal Sapolia in one of his poems "Kandia Raunain Aan" ("Dwellers of a Rugged Land") celebrated in a lively diction and galvanizing rhythm the elemental simplicity and indomitable fortitude of the Dogras. The poem refurbished the image of the Dogras and proved to be a potent psychological pickup for them.

Jitendra Udhampuri's monumental epic *Jitto,* a righteous, godly tiller of Duggar, who embraced martyrdom for his dauntless crusade against feudalistic rapine, intimidation, and coercion, and whose legendary status inspires reverential awe in the Dogra psyche, provided a rallying point to the Dogra community and revitalized its sense of identity.

Dharm Chand Prashant tapped into the anecdotal raw material of Duggar and neatly structured it into suspenseful, snappy narratives which stirred the ethnic consciousness of the Dogras.

The social and cultural aspects of Dogra ethos also became a characteristic theme of many other Dogri prose writers as Bhagwat Prasad Sathe, Narendra Khajuria, Ved Rahi, Madan Mohan Sharma, Om Goswami, O.P. Sathi, Dr. Champa Sharma and Bandhu Sharma, to name a few.

Dogri writers thus vigorously responded to the clarion call which the Dogra community made on them in terms of its identity crisis.

Narsingh Dev Jamwal like many other Dogri writers chose the affirmatory method to grapple with the identity crisis of his community. In his sonnet "Mansar" Jamwal invokes the motherly aspect of Duggar and turns it into a filial bond to hold the children of the land together as one integrated community. Through the projection of Duggar as a "dame" characterized by "grace" and "bounteous passion" in whom the collective being of the Dogras is rooted, Jamwal fuses the fragmented Dogra psyche into a sense of unified identity. Duggar thus becomes the essential identity of the Dogras beyond their factional differences, and lends dignity, substance, and a sense of kinship to their existence.

The point also derives support from Jamwal's several other poems where Duggar becomes an extension of the poet's own self. In "Jammu" Jamwal attributes his very entity to Duggar which bestowed on him

> A buoyant heart, a sturdy spirit,
> A physique with a healthy glow.

Similarly, Jamwal's "A Clue To My Identity" gives us the clue that the poet's identity should be sought not in his immediate person but in the physical and cultural milieu of Duggar which is inseparable from his identity.

> Seek me in my native mountains if you will,
> In the rolling emerald ranges that me blissfully thrill.
>
> The breath of my very being in every atom dwells,
> Every vine, shrub, and spout of my identity tells;
> Seek me in the damsels warbling on to the rill.

The identity of the poet and that of Duggar are so intermingled that each becomes the other.

However, Jamwal's identification of himself with Duggar should not be construed as parochialism with a xenophobic connotation. Duggar for Jamwal is only a unique component of the cultural mosaic which is India. He calls Jammu, which is a synonym of Duggar, "... a land ... India glories in ..." and

> A priceless pearl in India's crown.

Jamwal is a poet of dynamic vision; his identity therefore does not remain circumscribed by regional or national affiliations but extends beyond them to a cosmopolitan dimension. The regional and national affiliations of Jamwal are only a phase of his unfolding vision, and therefore are in concert with his cosmopolitanism.

In "Jammu" Duggar outgrows its regional enclave and becomes a vital symbol of the universal values of peace and love which are enshrined in the legendary origin of the town itself alluded to in the following lines:

> Jammu ! at thy magic name
> With blissful memories entwined,
> The legend of a lion and a goat
> Instantly comes to mind.

Legend has it that in the ancient days a Raja called Jambulochan was so impressed by an unusual spectacle of a lion and a goat drinking side by side at a river that he resolved to settle there a town after his name. Jambulochan thus became the eponym of Jambu which gradually changed to Jammu, and which is located on the Tawi river

Jamwal thinks in terms of global community which is a harmonious coalition of different races and nationalities each of which is complimentary to the beauty and vitality of the whole. Jamwal thus can take pride in being a Dogra without compromising his cosmopolitanism. Jamwal's poetic universe is instinct with a cosmopolitan spirit which also found an inspiring expression in his novel *Sanjhee Dhartee Bakhlay Manun (Strangers in a Global Home)*. This novel won Jamwal the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award of India in 1978.

Jamwal's cosmopolitanism also found nourishment in his concept of nature. According to Jamwal, nature is a phenomenal expression of the spirit rather than an independent phenomenon. In "Facsimiles" nature bears an imprint of the creative imagination of the poet, and in "My Rambler of a Darling Is Home" it is coloured with the mood of the poem's character. In "A Clue to My Identity" nature like a mirror reflects back to the poet the content of his own thought and emotion.

> On the tender lips of dainty flowers quivers my song,
> The melody born in my soul with runnels flows along.

Jamwal's concept of nature smacks of Berkeleianism; however, it does not cloud his sense of empirical reality but takes him beyond the apparent reality to its noumenal source which gives a sharper focus to his cosmopolitan vision by impressing on him the superficiality of apparent distinctions.

II

It is quite evident that Jamwal's cosmopolitanism is not the result of political theorizing but flows from his mystical vision of an all-permeating vital principle which is the essence of multifarious creation. According to Jamwal, there are no inflexible categories in the cosmic design which consummates itself through a dynamic process of becoming; and this endless metamorphosis which involves a successive transmutation of one form into another,spells the secret of apparent diversity. In fact, all are essentially one because all have their source in the same vital principle. In "One and All" Jamwal affirms:

> One earth, one heaven we all share,
> Our forms are sustained by the same vital air;
> The black and the white, the tall and the small
> Partake of one Being, and
> Are fellow beings after all.

Jamwal's mystical vision of one in all translates into love in the terrestrial realm. Cosmopolitanism is the global expression of love. When love dawns all barriers and differences disappear, and so do the sanguinary frays that go with them.

Love is the antidote of fear. In "The Vessel of Heart Shall Stay Afloat" Jamwal avouches the sustaining power of love in the midst of tribulations. Love takes away the poignant sting of suffering and becomes an unfailing spring of hope, fortitude, and strength which would ferry a person safely across the tumultuous sea of existence. In "The Vital Stir" Jamwal defines love as a yearning to live for others. Love keeps one going and therefore becomes the reason for living. All things are stirred and sustained by love.

This yearning alone is the vital stir,
Without it all is dust and grime,
A torpor hangs over everything,
And all is still in the womb of time.

In "Genesis" Jamwal proclaims that life without love is a life without meaning; all kindly acts come from love; and creation is the dissemination of love. "Genesis" seems to be Jamwal's poetic exegesis of a profound and well-known metaphysical statement that God the Creator is Love. In "For Whom Should I Write My Songs" Jamwal indicates that without love life becomes too unwieldy a load to sustain and eventually crashes into despair.

Jamwal's concept of love also enables him to view suffering from a teleological perspective. In a world without suffering there can be no room for love which gives zest and purpose to life. Suffering evokes and activates love which is the secret of unflinching intrepidity, phenomenal altruism, and ultimate fulfilment. The idea finds a dramatic expression in "Love" which deeply touches the heart.

Fired by the love of its unfledged brood
To keep them out of harm's way,
A dove unmindful of its puny form
engages the hawk in a mettlesome fray.

Love provides Jamwal with an answer to the conundrum of suffering in the terrestrial scheme over which philosophers and metaphysicians keep racking their brains.

In Jamwal's love poems love transcends the realm of carnal gratification and becomes a gradual unfoldment of the inner self. This process of unfoldment is symbolized in Jamwal's love poems by the roving lover, a romantic pilgrim whose ardent peregrination in search of love knows no halt. No earthly beauty is alluring enough to hold this wandering monk of love, and no fetters of attachment are sturdy enough to keep him from pulling up his stakes. The search for love thus becomes a never-ending spiritual odyssey which keeps the flame of love burning in its pristine purity. The fulfilment of love, according to Jamwal, results in satiation which is the death of love; and the death of love renders life barren and hardly worth living. That is why Jamwal's love poems deal with the agony of separation rather than the joy of conjugation. They are the dolorous strains of a love-smitten maiden languishing away in vain expectation of her love to return to her amorous embrace.

> The sun glides down the western slope,
> A pang of despair belies my hope.
>
> .. ..
>
> For whom my eyes are all agog
> And breath sustains the scourge of life,
> My smitten heart flounders on, would he
> Play me a soothing note on his fife ?
>
> ("The Sun Glides Down the Western Slope")

Even when the lovers are united, the joyous occasion of their union is overshadowed by a foreboding of separation which indicates that the union is just a fleeting affair. In "My Rambler of a Darling Is Home" the lovelorn maiden, though rapturously delirious over the long-awaited union with her sweetheart, is deep down inside haunted by a dark presentiment of imminent separation. Her refrain "My rambler of a darling is home," which frequently interrupts the effusive outbursts of her elation over her union with her "darling," subtly suggests her premonitory fear of losing him who seems to have won the notoriety of being a "rambler," and is simply a psychological prop to reassure herself against that fear.

Jamwal's concept of love which is a perpetual process of inner unfoldment, finds a close parallel in his concept of progress in the socio-political domain. Jamwal sees no limits to human potential. His dynamic vision sweeps the stellar frontier. In "Life Is Fleeting Apace" he venturesomely exclaims:

> I am a man of the new age;
> Even the moon is within my grasp;
> My waggon have I hitched to the stars.

Jamwal's concept of progress implies an incessant process of amelioration rather than the culmination of that process. In "I Have Yet a Long Way to Go" Jamwal observes:

> As I reach a milestone
> A start for the next must I make;
> I have yet a long way to go,
> A long long stride I have yet to take.

Jamwal's quatrain has a sonorous Frostian ring about it. Robert Lee Frost (1874-1963), an American poet of dynamic vision, writes:

> *The woods are lovely, dark and deep,*
> *But I have promises to keep,*
> *And miles to go before I sleep,*
> *And miles to go before I sleep.*[1]

However, Jamwal is no more indebted to Frost for his idea than Frost is to Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) whose work is replete with variations on this transcendental theme. All evidence shows that Jamwal's idea is native to his poetic vision. Coincidentally great minds do sometimes think alike.

---

[1] "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," in *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward connery Lathem (*New York*, Henry Holt and Company, 1975), p. 224.

In Jamwal's concept of progress every end becomes a new beginning, and the consequent distance between the goal and the goalseeker spurs the forward movement which is the hallmark of progress. That is why when Jamwal envisages a better world, it does not take on a utopian character which is indicative of stagnation. The concept of utopia as a paradigm of perfect world has no rational validity for Jamwal, not because humanity is imperfect but because a perfect world signifies the consummation and therefore the cessation of the ameliorative process, which is incompatible with infinite human potential. Utopia marks the end of human achievement which, according to Jamwal, knows no bounds; Utopia therefore is not in accord with his dynamic vision. Utopia also denotes regimental uniformity resulting in irksome monotony which is at odds with Jamwal's pragmatic sense of diversity and enterprising spirit embodied in the statement that "there is no end to men nor to their ways" ("Pathways").

Since the ultimate fulfilment of ameliorative process shall spell the demise of that process, a utopian world cannot but be insipid, spiritless, and frozen. Perfection is the outcome of uninterrupted endeavour for betterment and therefore has no ultimate connotation about it. As soon as one peak of achievement is scaled another peak yet more majestic and loftier soars into view with a fresh challenge. A perfect or utopian world entails a denial of new challenges and therefore betrays a symptom of naive self-beguilement. A utopian concept therefore amounts to a veiled confession of helplessness rather than hope.

Jamwal likes to meet a grim challenge head on rather than escape from it into a utopian make-believe. Besides, no challenge is the last challenge because the end of challenges would also mean the end of ameliorative process which is sustained by challenges, and which in turn sustains perfection. The rugged, parched, dreary "Wasteland," according to Jamwal, is reflective of our inner drought, the inability to rise to the occasion, which would not allow us to remedy the critical situation. No "Wasteland" is so arid and sterile but it can be turned into an elysian field with assiduous sweat. Nothing is unavailable but unremitting endeavour is the condition. We cannot rest upon our laurels without having a luxuriant field choked with briery weeds. The quest for perfection goads us on and on and fulfils itself in the very elusiveness of its ultimate fulfilment.

Reversion to the past brings no compensation for our current inadequacies. The point is allegorized by Jamwal in "A Send-Off I Cannot Give." The poem recounts a mother's gut-wrenching anguish consequent upon the traditionally obligatory relocation of her beloved daughter at her husband's home. This marital relocation involving a total repudiation of the girl's connection with her parental home, is suggestive of a progressional movement which though painful becomes necessary in the process of growing. The "Porters of Time" eventually make away with the cuddly comforts we have become inured to, and would not relent despite our passionate outcry against this deprivation which lands us in a taxing situation. The poem implies that the only way out of this trauma is to come to terms with the fact that life is a series of transitional phases conducive to our development, and break the hold the past has on us so that we can composedly march towards a new goal to fulfil ourselves. One cannot march ahead and look backwards at the same time without bumping into a snag. Emotional dependence on the past hinders our development and therfore should be given a speedy and stoic send-off.

Jamwal holds that the golden age is not behind us but lies ahead. He therefore demurringly questions: "Must I yearn for what is done with and forgotten...?" ("Life Is Fleeting Apace"). Jamwal has the drive and gumption of an adventurer who would not be encumbered with the dead weight of a jejune tradition and "be perpetual grist to the routine mill" ("Perspective"). His aspiration must spread its wings to the fullest span. Wistful longing for the past offends Jamwal's enterprising spirit which revels in squaring off against raging hurricanes and battering waves to steer on to newer and better climes.

It is nonetheless a sport
Involving boats, and waves, and tempests galore;
And it goes well with my grain,
It fascinates my heart;
To me it is just a mode of living.

("A Slanderous Indictment")

In "With the Sentence of Life One Must Comply" Jamwal frowns on shady compromises, imbecile capitulation to oppression, and vile worldly ways which out of scandalous expediency sacrifice human dignity and advancement. Jamwal believes in drinking the bitter cup of life gamely to the lees, and will not suffer the spirit to be stifled with the acrid smoke of dismay and frustration. As the poem indicates, hardships put Jamwal on his mettle and replenish his energy, for he looks upon them as a conditioning discipline prepratory to success, and therefore remains undaunted by them.

Every clang of iron preludes a new epoch
whose liberating spirit the oppressive walls shall seize;
……………………………………………………………………
The spirited eagle does not suspend its flight
Though lightning runs amuck
And thunder threatens blight.

Human potential and resourcefulness shall never be allowed to go to waste because of timorous or complacent addiction to the status quo.

The uninterrupted flow of dynamic energy which is the vital essence or the animating spirit, affords Jamwal a clue to the mystery of death. Since the vital spirit brooks of no barricades, it jettisons the indwelt body when the latter ravaged by time, affliction, or accident ceases to be an effective vehicle of its operation. The vital spirit then finds a new body adequate to its purpose of perennial progression. Death thus becomes instrumental in the vital spirit's continual march towards perfection. Jamwal therefore hails death as his true soul mate whom he has known since "the dawn of time" ("My Sweetheart"). Death is not the ultimate end but a wholesome release from the purposeless, grinding routine which chokes our vital growth. Life becomes a cruel farce, a collosal waste if it is no more than an evanescent flash which gets lost for ever in the murky cloud of death.

III

Jamwal's concept of dynamic energy or vital spirit gives him a critical outlook on some of the behavioristic patterns of society. In "I Am But a Playing Card" and "The World" Jamwal maintains that vanity and self-conceit are the result of a myopic obsession with the body which is nothing more than a temporary vehicle of the vital spirit. The mean and the mighty are alike swept away into the dustbin of time. The vital spirit alone survives. The egotistic brag about our material trappings, which are only an appurtenance to the body and become meaningless when the body falls, is therefore grotesquely pathetic.

In "Maya" Jamwal imputes the state of human bondage symbolized by a pupal cocoon to megalomaniac conceit fed by egocentricity and doltish infatuation with the worldly allurements which become an impediment to the spirit.

A servile, unappeasable craze for material possessions, referred to as "Gargantuan ambition" in "The Wasteland," keeps a person from recognizing the inner substance which is immune to the ravages of time. It is an established fact that materialistic obsession is the prime culprit in psychosomatic disorders, such as insomniac stress, ulcerous anxiety, nerve-racking paranoia, and clinical depression which turn life into a downright affliction. In "Maya," "The Wasteland," "I Am But a Playing Card," and "The World" Jamwal underscores the point that some measure of modesty and detachment are necessary even for the enjoyment of material status and possessions, and that these qualities are the concomitants of orientation to the spirit which is the inner substance of our being.

It is evident that Jamwal's progressivism is not a reckless plunge into the trendy and newfangled notions associated with modernistic claptrap, but is judiciously seasoned with circumspection. Similarly, his rejection of the old is not an act of icnoclastic passion but is discreetly guided by his rational appraisal of its appropriateness in view of the spirit of the time.

Jamwal is certainly loth to see the return of feudalistic horror embodied in the unalleviated drudgery of an emaciated, impecunious peasant; but a frenzied scramble for lucre in our ultramodern age strikes him as equally demeaning and dehumanizing. As his poem "Scoop" demonstrates, Jamwal's heart bleeds at the sight of urban slums crammed with human robots programmed to crank without respite the wheels of industrial economy. The squalor and sordidness of industrial structure (thought to be the very fulcrum of a progressive society) which have taken a heavy toll on human dignity and sensitivity, fill Jamwal with a soul-searing anguish. Jamwal's prime concern is the enrichment of human life, and that concern is not satisfied simply by the accumulation of industrial trinkets which trivialize human life itself.

That obscene cupidity, a predominant trait of industrial culture, has turned humans into flint-hearted, pelf-chasing maniacs is further evidenced by yellow journalism signifying the sensationmongering media of our times. In "Scoop" Jamwal takes a hard swing at yellow journalism which shows an inordinate appetence for the publication of chillingly graphic pictures and intriguing, suspenseful, overblown headlines, but no consideration whatsoever for a candid, sensitive exposition of facts. Yellow Journalism uses problems and situations not to foster critical awareness but to pander to morbid instincts and supply cheap diversion. It plays on the base impulses of human nature to find an easy road to riches.

In "Scoop" Jamwal depicts with subtle irony a sensation-mongering photojournalist who trains his camera on the grimy, malnourished ragamuffins of a shanty town to make a lucrative scoop for his tabloid. To him these wretched creatures mean little more than a "human commodity" which he scans with the sharp, practised eye of a trader. He calls these miserable-looking urchins "very very cute," and obviously, for him their cuteness lies not in their ill-fed, ill-clothed grubby frames but in the irresistible appeal of their horrid plight to the morbid taste of the tabloid buyers, which will keep his coffers well stacked with bankrolls. Jamwal's point is that in our insane chase after affluence we have flagrantly violated the line of ethical discretion and have blindly stumbled into an unconscionable and insensitive practice of targeting the less fortunate for our predacious abuse and manipulation. Elsewhere he agonizes over the brazen, soulless industrial culture which sickeningly posits that "Man is not man but merchandize" ("With the Sentence of Life One Must Comply").

In "Breeeders of Pollution Are We" Jamwal brings out another opprobrious aspect of our rapacious greed in terms of environmental disaster which is threatening our very existence. Our relentless pillage of natural resources, which has precariously disrupted the planet's ecological balance necessary for survival, has given rise to calamitous results.

People are explosively multiplying,
But tr ts are dwindling fast.

We have thus foolishly got ourselves into a situation which is not only heavily draining our resources but which has also made us vulnerable to cataclysmic erosions and floods. Our mountain ranges, the"purveyors of life," are sullied with swirling toxic fumes, and our beauty spots are wantonly laid waste. We have thus outrageously defiled the earth which once was "arrayed in pristine environment."

There is no denying the fact that deadly substances like polychlorinated biphenyl and radioactive waste have grievously scarred the earth. Frequent massive oil spills, and effluent from factories and urban habitats have turned the sea into a gigantic sewer; and deleterious gaseous compounds like hydrocarbons and chlorofluorocarbons, which fossil fuel-driven industry, transportation, and refrigeratory gadgets are spewing out round the clock, have ripped apart the atmospheric ozone layer and thereby exposed us to perilous levels of lethal ultraviolet rays.

Our environment is reeking with pollution which, according to established facts, is the cause of respiratory disorder, mental retardation, gastroenteritis, and all kinds of malignancies. Jamwal touches a raw nerve in his succint and solid statement that "...a sound physique that knew no lassitude" is now up against a serious menace because of our polluting ways. Catastrophic occurrences at Three Mile Island, Prince William, Chernobyl, and Bhopal, which have become gruesome symbols of the horror of environmental pollution, lend strong countenance to Jamwal's point. The "Breeders of Pollution Are We" is a reminder that we live in symbiotic relationship with nature, therefore every outrage we perpetrate upon nature comes back to haunt us, and that if we do not clean up our filthy act real soon we might as well go the way the dinosaurs have gone. The rapacious exploitation of nature which sustains us, is a capital offence against our own survival, and there is no reprieve from the death sentence which that offence entails.

Jamwal expects each of us to be environmentally considerate as a matter of our bounden responsibility to ourselves and to our planet. However, in "Breeders of Pollution Are We" he makes no bones about the fact that our politicians being unable to stand up to the pressure from the industrial sector, which sacrifices environmental concerns to pecuniary interests, have done very little to get a handle on the problem of insidious pollution. In the poem Jamwal contends that environmental concern of our politicians is only an eyewash as it does not go beyond their declamatory haranguing which is only a political ploy to bilk the masses of their votes.

Jamwal issues a very dismal report card on our politicians. His quatrain "Chairs" portrays in dark, sardonic colours the ignominious uncouthness and pachydermous effrontery with which these politicians comport themselves in the House of Commons to hold on to their self-serving chairs. In their profound wisdom they believe that the chairs hurled at each other as guided missiles in the heat of argument sound a lot more convincing than words; so they put these chairs to the best possible use to make a point, and consider this free exchange of volleys the very essence of freedom of expression.

In "The Way to Unity" Jamwal unmasks the sly preverication with which these politicians betrary the public trust to grind their own sordid axe.

> "Unity, unity," they fervently chant,
> But unity bedims their lustrous smile;
> A double-edged falchion do they wield,

Seemingly guileless, inwardly vile.

……………………………………………………

Everyone is for "grab and flee,"
Though their buzzword is unity.

In "All about Unity" Jamwal calls attention to the duplicity of these politicians. They sail under false colours. Apparently they are never tired of pontificating about unity, but surreptitiously they keep plying their conniving tactics to sow dissension to reap votes. They have a forked tongue and dissemblance is their cardinal trait.

In "A Rude Awakening" Jamwal shares with the reader his uncanny insight into the hidden motives of politicians who have no qualms about using human misery to promote themselves. In the poem Jamwal draws upon the concept of out-of-body experience literally claimed by countless adherents of the New Age gospel; but with an innovative twist he turns that concept into a powerful poetic device to perform a critical function. The poet's out-of-body experience, unlike that of a New Age initiate, does not reveal to him the tranquillizing light at the end of a tunnel in some extraterrestrial sphere, but equips him with an "inner light" which makes every disguise in a political masquerade brightly transparent. Jamwal thus is able to perceive that the acts which politicians ostensibly pass off as part of their public duty are in fact no more than a vain display of their egotism, and that their selfish concerns have led them to beleive that all is right with the world as long as all is right with them.

The poems "Breeders of Pollution Are We," "Chairs," "The Way to Unity," and "A Rude Awakening" also patently suggest that these depraved politicians have created a political cesspool infested with cronyism, nepotism, patronage, and graft which have spawned a deep-seated cynicism about the value of commitment, candour, and competence which alone can pave the way to success, justice, and prosperity.

In "A Plea for Change" Jamwal calls for a radical change in an effete and unjust establishment; but he is a radical of spirit and not of sword. Jamwal is an advocate of inner change rather than of revolutionary upheaval, and the pen which wields sovereignty over spirit can play a crucial role in bringing about this inner change. It is the contents of the political bottle rather than its label that needs must be changed. Jamwal is therefore looking for a "a spirit loving and kind," and "upright conduct and honest intent" which alone can bring about the desired change ("The Way to Unity"). Jamwal remains totally unimpressed with catchy slogans, fancy manifestoes, and rousing orations divorced from good faith. Jamwal has a sobering message for a social activist and a political demogogue who vehemently advocate reform, that there is no better way to reform than to start reforming one's own self. Jamwal thus has more faith in decent individuals than in a system. In " A Plea for chang" he tellingly observes:

> Nature made man, and man the system.

A system regardless of its constitutional make-up is as good or bad as the people who run it. The constitutional merits of a system therefore provide no safeguard against the depravity of its members. What matters in practical life is the quality of an individual rather than the structure of a system. Jamwal thus goes much further than political manifestoes and constitutional guarantees to ensure an equitable system which he seeks in the probity and good faith of its members.

Jamwal truly believes in democracy which implies a voluntary and united action for the common weal. Jamwal's democratic belief is based on spiritual egalitarianism attributable to an all-embracing principle of being. Democracy, according to Jamwal, is a condition of the spirit rather than a clause of the constitution. Mere constitutional semblance of democracy unsupported by a broad, egalitarian spirit turns out to be a no go as it soon degenrates into internal bickering and sectional discord geared to narrow divisive ends.

Jamwal holds that egalitarianism is the result of enlightenment which a free pen alone can disseminate. In his ode "To a Pen" Jamwal therefore puts up an ardent defence for a free pen. Censorship, according to Jamwal, is the worst of all crimes, for it paralyses the reflective process which leads to enlightenment, and therefore becomes the cause of mental insolvency and cultural impoverishment. This explains why free democratic societies are much more advanced than those where the freedom of pen falls victim to a despotic clamp down. Jamwal hails pen as "Liberty's vital breath." The freedom of pen reflects the freedom of spirit; it can therefore charge the jaded souls with new life. This fragile reed is the fountain of unfathomable might.

> Just remember thou art mightier far
> Than a scimitar without a stain.
>
> ....
>
> Thy slender form over deadly bolts
> Holds an absolute domain.

No sabre-rattling can strike into an oppressor's heart the kind of awe which the flourish of a free pen does. A free pen symbolizes a free spirit which can rise superior to all external restraints; no dungeon is dark and deep enough to hold it captive. A free pen poses a grave threat to an oppressor's authoritarianism despite his guards and garrisons; therefore the impoundment of a free pen becomes the prime concern of an oppressor. A liberated spirit embodied in a liberated pen fosters astuteness and ingenuity which, as Jamwal affirms with reference to the fabled vanquishment of a lion by a hare in the *Panchatantra*, no oppressor with all his brute force can ever match. As long as the pen is free no tyrannic satrap is puissant enough to keep the Promethean spirit of humanity in chains.

IV

Jamwal's creative mind expresses itself through a variety of artistic mediums. He can carve a solid poem out of a rock with exquisite delicacy and finesse, and handle a brush with the same elegant ease as he does a pen.

Jamwal's poetry can be called a literary equivalent of Pahari *kalam* or Pahari school of art known for its rich delicate detail, elegant colour scheme, and graphic vignettes of life. However, in his paintings Jamwal departed from the tradition of Pahari *kalam,* though Jammu province is regarded as one of the nurseries of that kalam, and instead took to the non-objective or abstract style of art.

Jamwal's poetry is as vivid and tangible as his canvas is fluid and surrealistic. It seems that Jamwal's pen and brush are at the opposite extremes of the concrete and the abstract, and therefore are at odds with each other. However, the fact remains that the two represent different aspects of the same organic creative process, and serve as complimentary tools to the understanding of that process.

Jamwal took to writing poetry long after his experiment with colours. His canvas therefore reflects the conceptual phase of his creative process. Lines and contours in Jamwal's paintings open the door to the graphology of his mind where ideas surge in a welter of interfusion. The colours in his paintings shade off into, rather than interact with, each other; and this interchromatic fluxion which makes them broadly suggestive, challenges the aesthetic perceptiveness of the viewer. Jamwal's canvas is a window to the chrysalidal phase of his vision which emerged fully fledged in a poetic form.

Structurally speaking, Jamwal's poetry is much closer to his sculpture than to his painting. Both his poetry and his sculpture are an entelechy of his potential thought which kept groping for a distinct form on his canvas. His statuary, like his poetry, describes a creative movement from the essential to the actual. Therefore in general, his sculpted image can be visualized as a poetic concept and his poetic concept as a sculpted image. His icons are as poetic as his poems are iconic. For instance, the feminine figure in a pensive mood sculpted by Jamwal in black marble can be as easily visualized in his poem "When the Sun Glides Down the Western Slope" as the poem itself can be imaged in the said sculpted feminine figure in a pensive mood.

Jamwal's sculpture is ornamental; but his figures, like his poems, are not replicas or reproductions but imaginative representations. Again, like his poems, his sculpted figures are endowed with a dynamic quality attributable to a multidirectional arrangement of parts, baroque outlines, and diverse curvilinear postures which do not allow the eye to fixate but keep it moving along the flowing curves of the figures and thereby create a dynamic impression. The figures sculpted by Jamwal are specimens of sculpture-in-the-round as they are unencumbered with any background and therefore can be viewed from all sides. They are anything but stolid, squatty, and thickset, and show a marked absence of stiff vertical lines. All these factors also significantly contribute to the dynamic quality of these figures. Jamwal's poems too in the like manner are free from the cumbersome backdrop of tradition and are geared to an openended, uninhibited exposition of the world around us.

It may, however, be pointed out that Jamwal's poetry, though a formal actualization of his essential thought, is not the epitome of his thought. Jamwal's poetry is only a mode which embodies his dynamic vision but which does not exhaust it. Jamwal's dynamic vision with its ever inquisitive and exploratory thrust cannot be confined to a rigid propositional format. His sight remains ever set on a horizon looming in the distance which never seems to end. A horizon, according to Jamwal, is only a measure of vision. As one's vision expands so does the horizon. It will therefore be nothing short of premature and presumptuous to venture to make a final statement about his poetic vision.

Jamwal claims that the contents of his poems are the contents of his intimate experience. Jamwal's poetry is thus a living page from the journal of his life. He lived his poems before he wrote them. In "That Is Living" Jamwal affirms that the quality of life is determined not by comforts and conveniences but by the indomitable will to live actively in defiance of formidable odds, that life must be savoured in fulfilling action rather than frittered away in vain regrets. Action brings experience, maturity, and knowledge which are the ingredients of wisdom. Learning is a lifelong process which postulates lifelong action. Jamwal's interaction with life rather than his armchair musings moulded his poetic vision. In "Facsimiles" Jamwal calls his poems "facsimiles of the soul" which embody his sensitive and spontaneous response to the world around him. To action-oriented Jamwal the creative process offers no satisfaction unless it has a bearing on our everyday existence.

Dynamic vision which implies an endless process of growing is the product of dynamic living. Dynamic vision therefore is able to rise above dogmatism often reflected in religious fanaticism which is a sign of stunted development. Because of his closed mind and myopic vision, a fanatic is unable to relate things to an overall perspective and therefore becomes intolerant of a view at variance with his own which he regards as absolutely final. As a result, a fanatic often develops a messianic complex which leads him to force others to accept his version of the truth for their own good, and any sign of hesitation on their part, no matter how rational, becomes in his eyes an act of self-betrayal. He thus feels morally obligated to press on with his alleged god-ordained soteriological mission even if it entails draconian persecution, to save the 'sceptical morons' from their self-destructive ways. This is how religion, as Jamwal points out in his poem of the same title, which is meant to bring peace and fulfilment, is turned into an engine of unspeakable horror and affliction. Jamwal suggests a discreet and openminded approach to religion to determine its functional merit. He states:

> The answer lies with you.

In this statement from "Religion" Jamwal implicitly appeals for circumspection and level-headedness in regard to religious matters but cautiously refrains from giving an imperative direction which would have been incompatible with his disapprobation of dogmatism.

The sense of right and wrong, as Jamwal indicates in "Supplication," is the fruit of inner development and cannot be imparted from without through didactic precepts. Poetry works through gentle, persuasive suggestions and therefore can be much more uplifting than didacticism which comes down on us with an imperious hauteur and consequently can give offence to our sense of autonomy leading to a hardened attitude. Unlike didacticism, poetry hones our aesthetic sensibilities the lack of which is the major cause of hurt and suffering in the world. Poetry is a pleasurable vehicle of truth which makes us wise by making us human. Poetry thus becomes the instrument of inner transformation which Jamwal puts a high premium on.

Jamwal's poems describe a broad spectrum ranging from social, political, and ecological concerns to yellow journalism, metaphysical reflections, and affairs of the heart; but all these poems share a common characteristic in the sense that they embody Jamwal's dynamic vision. These poems provide a deep insight into life but they are totally free from a hint of dogmatic rigidity and only appeal to the dynamic process of growth and understanding. Jamwal steers clear of textbook approach to life which does not go beyond dull, pedantic theorizing, and instead taps into his own experiential substance. He thus makes it quite clear that poetry is an imaginative re-creation of life but it is not a substitute for living.

Jamwal is a poet of self-reliance which places a strong emphasis on our accountability for the kind of world we live in. Self-reliance is the freedom to choose a course of action which gives rise to an ineluctable effect, salutory or hurtful, corresponding to its nature. As Jamwal points out in "God and the Devil," our existence is governed by a "causal force" or rational principle of causation deducible from the "working of the universe," and this causal force, according to Jamwal, is God. In another poem called 'God" Jamwal defines God as the source of "immutable laws" which sustain and regulate the cosmic operation. Jamwal thus brushes aside the trite notion of chance or fate, a capricious force which treats us as mere playthings and makes or breaks us as it pleases. The concept of fate with its eccentric operationalism is repugnant to Jamwal's rational belief in an orderly universe.

In "God and the Devil" Jamwal expounds the abstruse theological concept of God and the Devil from a familiar psychological perspective. God and the Devil signify the rational and irrational aspects of human nature respectively. God and the Devil thus do not remain mere abstract metaphysical entities but become part of our essential disposition. Terrorism, according to Jamwal, is an act of the Devil in that it is spawned by an irrational mind ; it victimizes innocent lives, unleashes wanton destruction, and is therefore incommensurable with anything sensible or positive. The Devil for Jamwal is only an archetypal image of the irrational aspect of human nature mirrored in a negative, grisly terrorist act.

Similarly, God, according to Jamwal, represents the positive and constructive aspect of human nature of which, as metophorically stated in "Love", "Genesis," "The Vessel of Heart Shall Stay Afloat," and "Vital Stir," love is the noblest expression.

Jamwal thus cuts through the recondite theological abstractions surrounding the concept of God and the Devil and brings it to bear on the pragmatic realm by way of his rational principle of self-reliance. As rational beings we cannot impute our plight to the freaks of some chimeric force. Our problems are self-inflicted as they result from our negative, irrational conduct; and we alone can find a way out of them by replenishing the positive and rational aspect of our nature. We can prudently surmount the ills which we have imprudently incurred. Through his concept of self-reliance grounded in the immutable and consistent principle of causation, Jamwal not only assures us of fair play in the universal scheme of things but also affirms our freedom to choose our own role therein. He thus slams the door shut on those who inanely try to find a scapegoat for the unsavoury consequences of their irrational deviation from a responsible course of conduct.

However, being an adherent of rationality, Jamwal also in all fairness puts the shoe on the other foot. Terrorism is certainly heinous, and the world would be much better off without it; but it is also very likely that those who fulminate against terrorism could be the ones who may have unwittingly supplied the detonator that sets off the terrorist blast. In some of his poems as "survival," "A Plea for Change," "To a Pen," "Chairs," and "All about Unity," Jamwal focuses on the importance of human sensitivity, upright conduct, moral integrity, and equitable dealing to defuse the time bomb of rancour and resentment which otherwise can explode and engulf the entire community in its flames. In these poems Jamwal expressely discards the fallacious assumption that power and affluence can ride rough shod over fundamental human rights and get away with it. The clue to a peaceful world lies in a peaceful mind which does not go with an unclean, oppressive system.

Jamwal is an avant-garde poet who stayed away from the purely descriptive and panegyrical trend and brought to Dogri poetry a thought-provoking and richly symbolic content. Jamwal's poetry is a stimulating exercise in critical reflection. it not only challenges our conventional norms to determine their relevance and validity in the rapidly changing times but also directs the probing light of scrutiny inwards to expose the hidden motivational springs of human mind to establish human accountability. Human mind is a supreme paradox; it can be a seething cauldron of infernal propensities which smite the world with disastrous virulence, but it can also be a nurturing cradle of altruistic love and generous compassion which suffuse murky despair with the radiance of hope. What kind of world we are going to live in depends on which side of our nature we chose to cultivate.

Jamwal's critical reflection thus admits of no stereotyping. Time the archshuffler that allows nothing to remain unchanged, keeps confronting us with new challenges. Thus no community can afford the luxury of being smug about its status without risking stagnation and decay. It must prove equal to the exigent circumstance which the dynamic current of time brings in its wake, to ensure its survival and advancement. Jamwal thus jolts us out of our dull routine and sluggish complacence to get us to gird up our lions to meet the new challenges.

Jamwal entertains a vision of global community undivided by ethnic and national barriers; but he is no visionary. He can work out a rational equation between a specific goal and the proper endeavour and attitude to get there. Humanity has infinite possibilities, but each possibility entails a price in terms of commitment and application. Jamwal therefore treads a fine line between euphoric optimism and cynical despair. He is well aware that diversity can lead to jarring discord and that it can also be the basis of soothing harmony like the diverse musical notes of a grand symphony. Because of their common origin in One Being, all beings are akin to each other; and it is this mystical realization of the potential unity of all beings that nurtured Jamwal's symphonious cosmpolitanism.

Whatever may be the source of Jamwal's cosmopolitanism, its feasibility remains unquestionable. The concept of a new world order under the auspices of UNO to further peace and freedom, the information highway paved with computers, fax machines, videophones, and other miracles of satellite technology, rapidly growing free trade, transcontinental environmental concerns, and exchange programmes sponsored by the institutions of advanced learning and research around the world are enhancing the sense of global kinship and thereby are chipping away at the divisiveness of national and political borders. Jamwal's poetry in its own singular way is richly conducive to this process of global unification. Jamwal is a poet of dynamic vision, global conscience, equitable world order, and human dignity; and all this provides a good enough reason to introduce Jamwal to the world beyond the borders of Duggar through the English translation of his representative Dogri poems.

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Mansar

If the land of Duggar is likened to a dame
Whose aspect Love and Serenity, happily mingled, grace,
Whose bounteous passion is beyond all bounds and blame,
Then the Mansar lake is a beauty spot that adorns her face.
With softly gliding ripples her placid floor is laid,
The Urvashi[1] of poet's fancy whereon the light fantastic trips;
The music fluid it is on Nature's *jaltarang*[2] played,
Resonant to the rhythmic breeze that all over it skips.
In an attire out of silvery, lambent lunar splendour shaped,
A ravishing beauty her languorous youth dreamily lavishing away;
Or an azure bloom in a cerulean raiment draped,
With whom the rays with their scintillating shower are at play;
This damsel of a lake, that to Beauty a befitting form supplies,
This Dignity's reservoir,[3] is the very apple of our eyes.

---

1. *A heavenly being cherished by Indra, the god of gods, for her consummate art of dancing.*
2. *A muisical instrument based on a certain number of cups tuned by adjusting the measure of water in them, and played with a pair of wooden rods.*
3. *The literal meaning of "Mansar."*

A Clue to My Identity

Seek me in my native mountains if you will,
In the rolling emerald ranges that me blissfully thrill.

The breath of my very being in every atom dwells,
Every vine, shrub, and spout of my identity tells;
Seek me in the damsels warbling on to the rill.

On the tender lips of dainty flowers quivers my song,
The melody born in my soul with runnels flows along;
Seek me in the quickening showers that pure elation spill.

In the soft soothing redolence, in the wanton breeze,
In the orchard sprigs, in boulders in a meditative freeze,
Seek me in the spring that casts around her vernal frill.

My love of these hills and dales goes back to countless lives,
Time has sanctioned the bond on which this undying affinity thrives;
Seek in mountain sights the lays that flow from my quill.

Jammu

Jammu! at thy magic name
With blissful memories entwined,
The legend of a lion and a goat[1]
Instantly comes to mind.

Thou art an epic whose every word,
Aureate and brightly fair,
Rests upon a heroic act that can
Outlive Time's Lethean stare.

Dexterous hands have cast thy form
In an impeccable mould;
Thou art like a peerless gem
Set in an ornament of gold.

Thy pristine beauty is the envy
Of a luminescent temple sublime
Towering majestically in some region
Of a heavenly clime.

Beauty there is none that ever
Can thy luster unsullied outshine;
No melody ever did arouse the rapture
That thou hast made mine.

Nature timely rains on thee
Her quickening ambrosial showers;
Her seasons deck thee with dainty hues
And with vernal bowers.

The Tawi[2] heartily gurgling on
Thy feet with fondness laves;
And a hymn is raptly sung for thee
In the murmur of her waves.

A buoyant heart, a sturdy spirit,
A physique with a healthy glow
Hast thou on me bestowed, and thou
Alone the way of love could show.

As a land of the holy and the brave
Thou hast won immortal renown;
India glories in thee and thou art
A priceless pearl in India's crown.

---

1. Legend has it that during a hunt Raja Jambulochan chanced upon a spot where he witnessed an amazing sight of a lion and a goat side by side drinking at a stream. Struck by the pervasive spirit of harmony, Raja Jambulochan felt impelled to settle there a town called Jambu (Jammu) after his name.

2. The name of a stream that flows alongside the eastern quarter of Jammu.

For Whom Should I Write My Songs?

My pen moves, then halts again,
My soul is consumed with a nagging concern;
For whom should I write my songs?

With an anguished heart do I roam from place to place,
My soul mate have I yet to find;
For whom should I write my songs?

The shadows of life have beleagured me here,
And Death waits yonder to take his toll;
For whom should I write my songs?

Some stricken heart may yet rehearse my songs
Long after I am gone;
For whom should I write my songs?

Genesis

A chickadee by daylight
Committed herself to picking up strands and straws,
And had them stowed away in between the rafters
With fond concern and expectation.
By moonlight
She kept rearing and nurturing her young;
And then meticulously imparted to them
The knack of flapping their callow wings
With a gliding motion through the air.
Finally she herself took flight,
And the fledglings too followed suit.

The empty nest
Showing through the fissures in rafters
Put on a derelict look;
Some downy fibers
Dangled in the air,
And some got dispersed on the floor.

Once again a chickadee by daylight
Committed herself to picking up strands and straws,
And had them stowed away in between the rafters
With fond concern and expectation
For her chicks on the way.

Love

Fired by the love of its unfledged brood
To keep them out of harm's way,
A dove unmindful of its puny form
Engages the hawk in a mettlesome fray.

The Sun Glides Down the Western Slope

The sun glides down the western slope,
A pang of despair belies my hope.

The sun has made his day's run,
The earth to her bosom him fondly swings;
My pensive hope no longer soars,
despondence has clipped her wings.

Birds have set up a sprightly chirp
And are hovering round their pulsating nests;
In jubilant spirit is their being soaked,
Earth and heaven are decked with shimmering crests.

For whom my eyes are all agog
And breath sustains the scourge of life,
My smitten heart flounders on, would he
Play me a soothing note on his fife?

My Rambler of a Darling Is Home

My rambler of a darling is home,
The jasmine fragrance is waxing wild;
He called me with a seductive smile,
The jasmine fragrance is waxing wild.

The rapture I feel baffles speech,
A radiant glow has lit up the dark recesses of my heart;
His face outshines the perfect moon,
The jasmine fragrance is waxing wild.

He keeps up a romantic palaver all night long,
The silvery orb is on the wane, our amorous exchange i
climaxing;
A forlorn life smouldering away in despair is no life,
The jasmine fragrance is waxing wild.

As he arrived the birds recovered their knack to trill.
The champak buds put on a bloom;
My heart went delirious with joy,
The jasmine fragrance is waxing wild.

Grant me my wish, my sweet adorer!
Soak me through and through with your hue;
All colours pale before the colour of love,
The jasmine fragrance is waxing wild.

Life Is Fleeting Apace

As she dusted my room,
And scooped up from the nook of a closet
A wad of papers,
Flaky and flyblown,
My blessed spouse gave a wince,
Then broke into a giggle;
And as I looked on,
The floor was littered with papers.

Some of them were sheets from the dailies
Which carried headlines, bold and prominent,
Once a magnet to every eye,
But now jejune and meaningless;
They stared blankly like one
Whose youthful bloom
Into the abyss of oblivion Time had swept.

Some cards and letters,
Refrains from my ditties,
Snatches from my verses,
Half-done fragments of my strains,
Broken arcs which couldn't become a rounded whole,
Ill-fulfilled like slothful slobs.

A little further apart lay an envelope,
Distinguished-looking with a cheery aspect,
Bearing a dainty floral design, and
Inscribed with "forget me not"
Which failed to ring the memory's bell.

A curious impulse to reach for it swept over me,
And I found myself holding it
To unravel its mystery;

But little could be made out of it
Since these were the only words
That had survived the ravaging nibble of termites.

I am a man of the new age;
Even the moon is within my grasp;
My waggon have I hitched to the stars.
The earth for me is a blank sheet
Onto which a verse of mine
Daily do I commit.
Life is fleeting apace.
Must I yearn for what is done with and forgotten,
Or scrape from the bowels of termites
Frazzled bits of cards, memories, and faces?
Do I have so much time to spare?

- -

Pathways

They know every footstep's beat and bent,
And every heart's innermost content.

Chilled in the cold, in the heat grilled,
At times caked dry, or with torrents spilled,
They sleep not at night, nor repose during the day,
Who can thus serve, truly blessed are they.
Towns with the country, vales with heights,
Unite they the wilds with lovely sites.
Part they here, and there they meet,
Of guileless heart, they know no deceit.
Not a word they say, are privy to intent,
They know the heart's innermost content.

Of rest and repose signals they send,
Go anywhere one may, they never contend.
Good and bad alike they take,
They may be concerned, or then again elate.
"What a life!" they may think a thought or two,
They garner tears, and laughter they woo.
Men and pathways the same destiny sways,
There is no end to men, nor to their ways.
Both apprehend time's limitless extent,
They know the heart's innermost content.

The Wasteland

Winds blow in,
Winds blow out;
They whip up some sand here
And settle down some there,
But the sum total remains the same—
The soil is sandy as ever before,
The same its blistering heat,
The sirocco living up to its name
Its scalding sting retains,
And Gargantuan ambition though out of breath,
Never lets up on its fiery chase
after the ever elusive mirage.
Scanty showers,
That the clouds bring down
Once in a long while,
Can hardly alleviate
This land's parching thirst,
And the cacophony of seasonal frogs
Does little to serve its cause.
This land,
Arid, seared, and sterile,
To put on the vernal green
Demands with a vengeance
The sweat and blood of commitment firm;
And hardy pioneers
With unflagging fortitude,
Unfaltering sedulity,
And unswerving application
Alone can it afford.

A Slanderous Indictment

Hurricanes are raging all around,
And some in the offing ominously loom;
Still the boat is in one piece
And buoyantly afloat.
May be, hurricanes they are not,
But simply airy nothings
Spawned by the phantasmal fear of the mind;
Or else the boat
In such fortitudinous moments was wrought
That she boldly sets
Every tempest at nought.

Be that as it may,
It is nonetheless a sport
Involving boats, and waves, and tempests galore;
And it goes well with my grain,
It fascinates my heart;
To me it is just a mode of living.

Waves there are wielding might,
That surge rampant ahead,
And recede not until
Their battering they have done;
They serve to put the boat
On higher alert.

Then again waves there are,
Feeble and spent,
That timorously raise their head from afar,
Flounder around,

And with a vain regret flow away
In the sweeping current lost.
To grant that such weaklings
Could be waves
Is a slanderous indictment of their ways.

The Vessel of Heart Shall Stay Afloat

In the fathomless sea of thought
When waves of emotion tumble and collide,
When Destiny's bolts with thunderous claps
The fond aspirations deride,
When clouds of despair roll and rumble
And the light of Hope they totally hide,
The vessel of heart shall stay afloat
On the crest of a lovetide.

With the Sentence of Life One Must Comply

In the dead of night
The fitful glow of a firefly
Is confounded by Time's unrhythmic pace;
With the sentence of life one must comply.

Every step is up against a galling gyve,
The dragnet of Time allows no slips,
Taunts dart around, the watchful eyes know no blink,
Custom is unsparing in its vitriolic quips;
The stifling smoke swirling around
Fails to become a blaze,
Life like a damp cow-dung cake in a scuttle
Is wasting away in a smouldering haze.

Desire and its fulfilment are poles apart,
Death casts a dark shadow over life;
Mistrust, pretence, pomposity
Are the reputed worldly ways,
confusion of Freedom and Fate is rife;
Disorder and shady deals take the prize,
Man is not man but merchandize.

Every clang of iron preludes a new epoch
Whose liberating spirit the oppressive walls shall seize;
Life is a prison yet one it must embrace
And drink the bitter cup of life to the lees;
The spirited eagle does not suspend its flight
Though lightning runs amuck
And thunder threatens blight.

My Sweetheart

I and my sweetheart go way back to the dawn of time;
For ages a custom has it been of ours
To get together and then move apart.
Wish have I none to extol her form,
Or her beauty to acclaim.
Who on earth does not find his mate
Pretty, elegant, ravishing, and divine?
Did not Majnun persistently rehearse
The same old refrain? "Behold my Layla's charm
With these two eyes of mine."

But this alone about my darling can I profess
That plodding along the highway of life
When weary and footsore do I get,
She extends her hand of loving support
And holds me in a tight caress;
With her sleeky fingers my tousled hair
She puts in place, regales me
With honeyed words, and
Treats me to soothing melodies
The likes of which have never been heard before.

In quest of refreshing repose, and
Hoping to wake up to a new dawn,
With her arms around me
I drop off to serene slumber
Like a high priest of love
Who, having found his long-sought deity,
Commits himself with abandon

To her somniferous embrace,
Quite oblivious of the moment
When he must depart.

Death is that sweetheart of mine
That to my tattered hopes
And fagged-out being
A new lease on life provides.

I Am But a Playing Card

In the gaming house of this world
I am but a playing card.

Some hold me to their eyes
And some gently away me flick,
Others sharply plunk me down;
And finally with the cards of a trick
Am I stowed away to an obscure nook,
Unceremoniously thrown.

As I am caught up in the game,
I often tend to reflect
That all others here like me
Are nothing but cards in the deck,
Ranging from such potentates
As aces, kings, and queens of states
To plebein twos and threes and fours and fives
And a clutter of sixes and sevens and eights
And nines and tens to downright knaves.

Some like a jack are destined to obey,
And some to command like a regal spade;
And some like hearts have a comely form,
And like diamonds are some daintily shaped;
And being outlandish like clubs for some is the norm.

There are some men portly and trim,
Damsels are there too elegant and prim;
Each has a potential different and distinct,
And each leaves in his or her own time

An undeniable imprint;
Whenever three paltry deuces
Their forces joined,
Kings and queens and formidable aces
Were instantly to servitude consigned.

For a while all act their respective parts,
Falter and stumble by fits and starts,
Or follow suit;
And each in his or her turn
In the cards of a trick,
A mere nondescript,
Goes down the same route
To a place where
Destiny between the high and the low
All distinctions effaces;
Where twos and threes are lodged,
Huddled are there too
Kings and queens and aces.

There all await a fresh shuffle
For another go at a scuffle
Just to show how well
Their hand can they juggle.

Seated on the phaeton of time, behold!
The dexterous Dealer of the world's deck
Has been at play for aeons untold;
And when the cards get dingy,
Them He discards
And comes up with a new pack of cards.

Maya

The worm toils at its silken home
With ardour unallayed,
And deluded by the fond desire
Is caught in the mesh it made.

All about Unity

Those who have ripped unity into shreds
Make a hullabaloo why unity an aberrant course treads;
They sow dissension in pursuit of votes,
Then wonder why unity is so elusive and shake their heads.

Scoop

As I cruise around in my immaculate Maruti
For a scoop, these sable-coloured,
Bare-bodied, muck-besmeared kids,
Who exposed to the checkered sun
Blazing through the sparse trees
By a monotonous row of shanties
Bustle about on a blast-spewing road,
Look very cute, look very very cute.

Unmindful of them, their parents
Steeped in toil and
Wiping sweat off their brows,
Their sisters, aunts, and grandaunts
With their half-naked smutchy bodies,
engage my eyes and sneak into my heart.

I know my words wield magic,
Every line of my verse
Elevates me in the esteem of the world;
Every picutre snapped by me
embellishes the tabloids,
And its colourful, glassy layout
Is a delight to every eye;
Call it trendy, or mundane, or obsessive,
But this is a lucrative vocation,
Here the bread is buttered on both sides.

But to watch these smutty imps
Hang around my glistering car
And smudge it with their grimy hands,
Or dribble onto its bumper
A drop or two from a lollypop,
Riles me sore and inclines me

To lay into them real hard;
And then whosoever reaches out
With a swatch to rub off the blotch
Is beneath my contempt.

My sole concern is
Not to empathize with them,
Not to fraternize with them,
But to capitalize on them;
My coffers do I replenish
By running their pictures
In poses, and from angles,
Ever new and sundry,
To illustrate the facts.

All hustlers the same stratagem ply,.
Along with the grandeur of demagogues
And the glitter of film stars,
For pelf they swap
The grim squalor and scrawny flanks
Of human commodity.

Breeders of Pollution Are We

Woodlands are our treasure-trove,
They are our manifest destiny;
We must conserve them, yet
We keep hacking them down;
We delude ourselves and others,
Breeders of pollution are we.

Forests have we ravaged,
Recklessly logged and burned,
On lumberyards have we sold them;
Beauty spots have we laid waste,
Yet we arrogate merit to ourselves;
Breeders of pollution are we.

The rustling breeze, the bubbling rills,
The pitter-patter of rain,
The earth arrayed in pristine environment—
Their worth the ancients could well understand,
But we have ruined it all;
Breeders of pollution are we.

The Siwalik hills did not come to exist for nothing,
Purveyors of life were they,
The young and the old from them drew sustenance,
And a sound physique that knew no lassitude;
But we have covered them with toxic fumes,
Breeders of pollution are we.

People are explosively multiplying,
But trees are dwindling fast;
As we rant and rave about ecology,
The earth is cleft further apart;
We can do little else than harangue the crowds,
Breeders of pollution are we.

Chairs.

With human sweat and blood these chairs are held high,
The ruling and oppostion chairs harbour the same intentions sly;
The import of freedom is fully brought home to us,
When chairs at each other in the House are let fly.

Memory

A pensive dew drop on a vernal leaf
To its new home glide off must;
Gently caressing the tendrils below
It fades away into the dust.

The Way to Unity

Buds and blooms are now litter,
The bouquet was never in such a disarray.
Is it the wind, or we who must be
Held accountable ? none can say.
Everyone is for "grab and flee,"
Though their buzzword is unity.

"Unity, unity," they fervently chant,
But unity bedims their lustrous smile;
A double-edged falchion do they wield,
Seemingly guileless, inwardly vile;
To unity does not lead this way,
Confined to words shall unity stay.

Who to these sly dissemblers
The substance of unity can expound?
If they just unlearn their selfish ways
Sanguinary frays will not us hound;
Let us stretch our minds like the boundless space
And unity shall all of us embrace.

Unity yields salubrious shades
Impregnable to torrid blasts;
The heart, oblivious of colour and clan,
in an empathic mould it casts;
Unity entails a thoughtful mind,
Sagacity, a spirit loving and kind.

Until these traits are inviolably fostered,
And the sanctity of human values is maintained,

For all the celebrations of Unity Days
Unity shall never ever be gained;
Editorials and declamations widely miss unity's content,
It can only be found in upright conduct and honest intent.

A Rude Awakening

Sprawling by the secluded bank of a river
As I ruminated on my celebrated name,
The reality of my worth and status struck home.
Guided by the inner light
The innermost depths of water I probed,
And combed the earth, and the heavens,
And subterranean domains;
Suns without number
Unfolded their splendour to me,
And the arcana of nature dropped their veil,
But nowhere could I
A trace of my own entity espy.

Gentle breeze shook her plumes,
Branches swayed,
And buds waxed into blooms;
And every bloom to me
Became a telescope
Which trained its sight
On every form dim or bright
That far or near looms.

Myriads of galaxies which
With their luminescent sparks
Bespangled the firmament,
And murky shades which lurked
Beneath the cryptic deep—
All lay bare within the sweep
Of my vision; I alone

In heaven or on earth or offshore
Was unaccounted for;
Instead my lifeless frame
Which replaced my "self"
Stretched across the floor,
The focus of some wordly game.

It had drawn quite a throng,
And to deck it out
In a brocaded sheet and a filigreed shroud
Each with the other played along.

The Brush and the Pen
Joined the concourse,
As did the tradesmen
Who well knew the ropes;
And veterans of political ring
Were for a spotlight jostling
Only themselves to beguile
Into the belief that
They were a cut above
The rank and file.

Under the floral weight
On it cast
My body was falling apart;
The inner light just about gone
Had left an unflattering fact behind:
Minions of Vanity, on her we fawn.

My worth and status amount to no more
Than a few memorial scrawls,

Hollow words,
And a specious eulogy;
All discourse about me
Is a vile gimmick
Employed to their own end
By the privileged and the slick.

A Plea for Change

The Raj where a man can't earn his keep should be cast aside;
The Raj which abets in hatred's sweep should be cast aside;
Nature made man, and man the system;
The system where animosities run deep should be cast aside.

To a Pen

Try a new theme my candid pen,
The world is acting in a guileful vein;
Paeans of love we have had too many,
It is time to strike up a martial strain.

Truth is no longer prized today,
Thou needs must dare the savage throng;
The human bond hast thou fostered for ages,
Be thou again its bastion strong;
Just remember thou art mightier far
Than a scimitar without a stain.

Thou art humanity's precious trust,
Thou art Liberty's vital breath;
The fiendish hands are closing in on thy throat
To stifle thee to death;
Stir up a cataclysmic thunder,
Unleash a flood of flaming rain.

Loving grace thou canst dispense,
Thou canst strike with a shattering might;
Thou hast the tender touch of flowers,
Thou canst spew out a withering blight;
Thy slender form over deadly bolts
Holds an absolute domain.

For ages people hast thou rescued,
History can well testify;
Thou art given to lofty goals,
Thy foes are treacherous and sly;
In times of crisis insouciant silence
Thou art not just wont to maintain.

Thy sight is set on new horizons,
Thy odyssey scorns the putrid shoals;
The heroic songs that flow form thee
Can galvanize the jaded souls;
Thy honour and renown are
The poet's recurring refrain.

Survival

A moth, naive and unwary,
Flitting around in frolicsome ecstasy,
Settles down on a wall;
And thereon lurk in vigilant wait,
As seasoned predators do,
Geckoes a few
Up their prey to snap.

The moment is critical, and
One can tell
That the flight or the swoop,
Whichever comes first,
Life or death
For the moth shall spell.

The lamb evokes commiseration,
And so do the other animals
Of innocuous disposition;
But, as Nature's law dictates,
The tiger is a carnivore,
It is not his wont
To feed on vegetation;
The wall lizard devours the moth,
And the lion the vilderbeeste,
And a cod among the minnows
Finds a nurturing feast.

Talk not of compassion,
Gripes and groans are
But a futile expression;

All of your wails and whimpers,
For reprieve your blubbering plea,
Cannot get them to alter
Their innate intent,
Or the laws of Nature circumvent;
This is not going to be.

Yet one can surely contrive
A way to exist, a way to survive;
If by his ingenious ploy
The astutious hare of the *Panchatantra*[1]
Can the tyrannous lion destroy,
Why can't then the man of the masses
His ingenuity trust
To make the tyrant bite the dust?

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[1] *A fifth century Sanskrit work by Vishnu Sharma. The work was designed to impart practical wisdom through fables.*

God and the Devil

From individualism to socialism,
Rationalism to dogmatism,
Reactionism to radicalism,
Positivism to mysticism—
Of 'isms' there is no end,
All forms and colours they pretend,
But terrorism stands out amongst them.

Horrid are the nights
And hideous the days
When eyes encounter little else
Than the bloody frays,
And a stack of corses,
Blighted homes,
The innocent slain,
Vehicles in flames,
And blazing debris
From the crashing planes,
Looking like a meteoric shower
That ominously lights up the trajectory
Of a falling luminary.

On terrorism all their elocution try,
But the proponent of this baneful policy
How many actually
Are able to descry?

Even God is not evident to the eye;
From the working of the universe alone
A deduction of some causal force we make,

And this causal force we God designate.

In this twofold process of thought and creation
The crucial fact becomes abundantly plain
That God and the Devil in contiguity dwell
Within the same human domain.

Tittle-Tattle

A sturdy hammer labours long and hard
With its smiting thunder
To cleave a granite which a slender fuse
In a flash blows asunder.

Religion

Religion—
It is a sacred faith,
A pious institution,
A noble code of human conduct,
A signature of a hallowed soul,
A way to salvation.

Religion—
It is a sinister incantation
To divide man from man,
To foment gory communal frays,
To brew mischief and unleash terror,
To grab power to smother the will to be free.

The sacred and the sinister,
Both are equally true;
What then is to be done?
The answer lies with you.

Perspective

This heart of mine,
Like a looking glass,
Pellucid but small,
Sends back reflections,
But they are no different than I.
Kinsfolk, neighbours next door,
My very own flesh and blood—
All seems so hemmed in and minuscule,
Like a water patch in a well
Which, if it should ever peek out,
Shall behold a sky
Hardly bigger than the palm of a hand.

My life is immured within narrow precincts;
My calendar? Better leave it alone.
The first week of every month
Abounds with cheer and content;
But one that follows at the end
Is bleak, hollow, vexatious,
A big vain, long lament.

About the weeks in between?
I can hardly keep count of them;
Not a shadow of them is
Ever in my mirror caught;
Or it could be that
Only at two weeks stands
The sum total of every month
That Life me hands.
This mysterious reckoning
Fain would I comprehend
Only if I could.

How I wish that this mirror of mine
Would not just limit its focus
To the first and the last week alone, but instead
Stretch its perspective, and reflect
New aspects of time, of earth, of heaven,
And what is beyond, modes and manners of all beings
Who, though apparently no kin of mine,
Are spliced together with me
On the same invisible string.

How I wish this mirror of mine
Would be a little larger,
A little clearer, wherein
I could view the weeks of my life
Which escape my ken;
For the mirror of my life,
Though pellucid, is too small;
It can reflect little else than
The triteness of humdrum existence,
A life caught between the grinding stones,
And doomed to be the perpetual grist
To a routine mill.

God

Is He or is He not?
Is a mystery too profound,
The immutable laws that rule the cosmos
Must have a sustaining ground.

Facsimiles

His feet trod the air,
And there they left their prints;
But none could spot them;
The air is impervious to sight.

He kept up his tune
To the dancing rhythm of time;
Songs kept flowing;
But none could know them;
They were audible to none.
Tick-tocking of the clock was all
The ears could catch.

He kept weaving a web of words
On the glassy surface of water;
The warp and woof kept interlacing;
But none could sense them;
They were palpable to none.
The undulation of waves was all
That could be felt,
Or deep down
The frisky frolic of piscatory fins
Which would heave up to the surface
As soon as the net was drawn.

Not just to weave a net,
But to cast and draw it too
Entails a blend of industry and art;
Art, which is his being;
Industry, which is his breath.

On the unseen tablet of air,
To the dancing rhythm of time,

On the glassy surface of water,
He kept making facsimiles of the soul
Like a maniac,
Without a care, without a thought
Whether or not
Someday someone
Will see them, hear them, sense them,
And take them to heart.

That Is Living

Even birds without wings
Can manage to hold onto life,
A life which is a lot more forbidding than death;
But none can bring himself to put
With his own hands
A strangle hold on his being
Simply because it is not equipped with the wings
Which can waft it across the skies.

To soar—,
To live—,
Are two entirely different things,
Each having a different import;
To live is not to rely on wings;
To live is a matter of zest for living
Stirring deep inside,
Which needs no wings to soar.

The Vital Stir

A wave lapped against the shore,
A wave from the shore was backward hurled,
A wave to caress the shore was yearning,
A wave confoundedly tossed and swirled.

The shore is far too remote,
The reach for the shore ever stretches on,
It is nearly there, it slips again,
The heart to quenchless thirst is a pawn.

Every wave a fond desire
Cherishes to embrace the shore;
But the shore itself is in anguish,
Who'll its crumbling line restore?

Dejection has engulfed the shore,
How can it regale the waves?
It itself is like a waif adrift,
Destitute of what it craves.

An inkling of hope is astir within,
Some wave by an act of kindly care
May it with the other side unite,
And the lonesomeness of ages repair.

Providence is privy to their hearts
Throbbing to love's common call;
He is the author of the pageant,
He is the One who knows it all

He knows if it ever comes to pass
That the heart of its love throb is bereft,
The reason to live then there is none,

None of the zest for living is left.

This yearning alone is the vital stir,
Without it all is dust and grime,
A torpor hangs over everything,
And all is still in the womb of time.

Longing

A leaf torn off the bough
And spun into a whirling dance,
From the vortex of a typhoon
Casts back a wistful glance.

Supplication

The shadows have deepened,
The soul bird looking for a love nest
Is sorely distressed;
The gaze is weary,
The wings are frayed,
Hope has sprung a dismal leak
And the striving spirit was never at a lower ebb;
All is under the pall of night,
The flame of life is faint and aflicker,
And still the nest is nowhere in sight;
Deliver me from my woes, my merciful Lord!
You alone are my refuge.

Childhood slipped by in frivolous sport,
Youth ran out under Beauty's thrall,
And oldage is squirming with festering desires;
Not a step did I take towards the righteous path,
Nor did a prudent thought ever cross my mind;
Dispel the cloud of ignorance, my merciful Lord!
You alone are my refuge.

Flagitiously we wallow in drunken indulgence
Treading the primrose path,
Unmindful of the heavenly effulgence
That light to all lights imparts;
Your doors are ever open to the suppliant,
Marionettes are we tied to your strings;
The spring of infinite compassion are You,
Mind not my frailties, my merciful Lord!
You alone are my refuge.

The World

A deck has all kinds of cards,
Mean and mighty, in an echelon,
And each has an excuse to brag
As long as the game is on.

A Send-Off I Cannot Give

Wrapped in the scarlet robe of anguish,
Up in the palanquin of pain,
The very image of my cherished dreams
Was about to make egress;
As I tried to form the parting words,
My head was in a whirl,
An emotional predicament took hold of me:
To keep her from going
Would bring on frets and regrets,
To let her depart
Would desolation and deathly quiet entail;
Without a friend, without a mate
How would my faltering steps hold?
A dim prospect of solitary life,
What a plight!
A solitary tree in the wild
Is but a sorry sight.

Welcome were frets and regrets,
And the torment that would go with them;
A paltry price to pay
For the solace of having her around.
A spontaneous cry broke from my lips:
Porters of Time!
Set the palanquin down;
To my darling daughter
A send-off I cannot give.

Kinship

Waves in a rolling stream
Together the same course chart;
They toss and tumble together
And finally break apart.

One and All

One earth, one heaven we all share,
Our forms are sustained by the same vital air;
The black and the white, the tall and the small
Partake of one Being, and
Are fellow beings after all.

I Have Yet a Long Way to go

As I reach a milestone
A start for the next must I make;
I have yet a long way to go,
A long long stride I have yet to take.

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A multi-media artist and a prolific writer in Dogri. Has published seven collections of poems and lyrics, three of short stories, two novels and nine stage plays and one act plays.

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